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**Cuban Civil Society Support Program
(CCSSP)**

Contract Number DOT-I-00-03-00009-00 TO 4

Monthly Report

March 2012

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1. Country Situation Update

Pope Benedict XIV Visits Cuba

On March 26-29, Pope Benedict XIV became only the second pontiff to visit Cuba since the Revolution, fourteen years after John Paul II's historic first visit. During the three-day visit, Benedict visited the city of Santiago and the Shrine of the Virgin de Caridad del Cobre, before traveling to Havana where he met with both Raúl and Fidel Castro. During Mass in Santiago, before an audience of more than 200,000, Benedict urged Cubans to "build a renewed and open society, a better society, one more worthy of humanity," and that as a pilgrim, he would pray for "peace, liberty and reconciliation," following his earlier comments that Cuba's Marxist structure "no longer corresponds to reality." Benedict met with Raúl Castro in Santiago, where he pressed for an expanded role for the Catholic Church in Cuba, and for Good Friday to be recognized as a national holiday. This request was later granted, and Good Friday was celebrated as a national holiday for the first time since the Revolution.

In Havana, Benedict urged the crowd of 300,000 attending Mass in Revolution Square to search for "authentic freedom," expanding his message that Cuba needed a "more open society, based on truth, justice and reconciliation." Benedict also denounced the 50-year-old U.S. trade embargo, saying such "restrictive economic measures imposed from outside the country unfairly burden its people." Prior to the Mass, Benedict met with Fidel Castro, in a meeting described as "animated and cordial," focused on Church liturgy and the inability of science and technology to solve future challenges. No signs were made that overtly political issues were discussed, prompting criticism from activists and dissidents within Cuba, and human rights groups and other leaders internationally.

Detentions Prior to Papal Visit

In the weeks leading up to Benedict's visit, more than 70 members of the Ladies in White (*Damas de Blanco*) were detained and later released without charge after being held for several hours, or in a dozen cases, overnight March 17. Nineteen members were detained Saturday, March 24 after attempting to stage a protest march in central Havana, and thirty-six members were detained as they tried to attend Mass in Havana as the group does weekly to protest the continued incarceration of political prisoners. Following Mass, twenty-two women and two men were arrested as they marched from the Cathedral to central Havana, attempting to go beyond a route that has been tolerated by authorities to date.

Earlier the same week, thirteen dissidents occupied the Virgin de Caridad del Cobre Catholic Church in Central Havana, demanding an audience with Benedict to implore him to act as a mediator on behalf of the Cuban people, to speak with authorities about freeing political prisoners, ending intimidation of dissidents, increasing access to information, expanding private property rights, eliminating travel restrictions and establishing a transitional government to end a half-century of the Castro Regime. The Catholic Church of Cuba condemned the protest, stating that places of worship should not be corrupted for political demonstrations. After two days, the dissidents were removed by Cuban authorities from the Church, at the request of Cardinal Jaime Ortega, Archbishop of Havana, and a prominent figure in negotiating the release of political prisoners in recent years.

Since the Pope's visit was announced in late December, protesters and dissidents have become more vocal and visible in their demands and actions, prompting greater reactionary repression from the Cuban Government. The Pope did not meet with any dissidents during his visit, and opposition groups reported that dozens of dissidents were detained and prevented from attending both services in Santiago and Havana.

2. Programmatic Highlights and Major Activities

Programmatic Activities:

Key Programmatic Accomplishments:

- **Sector CP** - *This innovative sector seeks to counter apathy and stimulate civic engagement by supporting media projects that communicate positive, unbiased messages through different aspects of everyday life and humor. In previous activities under this sector, the CCSSP created a variety of media products and was able to shape the social content of the items produced to promote civic analysis and a sense of duty for the targeted audience.*
- [SJO101]: This grant continues activities developed under SJO074 and SJO092, and supports the production of four additional deliverables within this initiative. The sixth deliverable was released and distributed in March. A cost extension was approved through the end of April to support production and distribution of two additional deliverables for a total of eight under the initiative. The seventh deliverable is in preparation for release in early April.
- [SJO102]: This grant is a continuation to grants SJO070 and SJO079. The fifth set of deliverables was approved and distributed in March. The dissemination strategy continues successfully, with constant growth among the local audience. This grant has been extended through April with additional funding to support production of additional deliverables and their distribution.
- [SJO103]: As a follow-on activity to SJO076, this grant supports additional products for distribution. The revised dissemination strategy was launched in March to increase the target audience base, to increase product approval among the target audience. New products were produced in March to support the new strategy and will be distributed in April.
- [SJO104]: This grant launched a new product for distribution across several platforms targeted toward a new audience. The grantee submitted the final deliverable for review, and the grant has been extended to allow for product distribution.
- [SJO105]: This grant will launch a new product influenced by activities under SJO104. The grantee has advanced production of approved deliverables, and has submitted final draft components for approval. During April, the grantee will complete production of final deliverables for review and approval.
- [SJO106]: Follow-on activities to SJO083 have been delayed due to travel schedules of grantee staff, delays in coordination with a partner institution. Due to the lack of progress, the grant was not extended to allow for more coordination. Closeout activities are underway and will be completed in April.
- [SJO107]: This grant will support a tool developed under SJO084. Following launch of the tool in December, the initial dissemination grew into a viral distribution campaign that continued through March to promote local user participation. To complement the local campaign, a broader campaign was launched simultaneously and has started to find support and coverage across mainstream channels. The tool has supported several local users to date, and interest in using and supporting the tool continues to grow. During April, the grantee will consolidate sustainability efforts to attract greater participation.
- **Sector CP (2)** - *This sector has exponentially exceeded expectations, and has demonstrated a true desire for freedom of expression and a need for increased networking capacity on the island.*

Therefore, the CCSSP has allocated significant resources toward achieving further success in this sector.

- [SJO098]: The revised deliverable was approved with additional final changes in late February, and will be implemented under the follow-on grant to SJO100. The grantee provided an updated final report incorporating the revised deliverable. This report is under review, and once it is approved, the grant will be closed and a final evaluation will be prepared.
- [SJO100]: The grantee submitted final activity and financial reports that are currently under review. Upon approval, final payment will be issued and administrative, programmatic and financial closeout will begin.
- [SJO111]: This grant is follow-on activity to SJO100, following clarification of an administrative issue under the previous grant. Under an approved cost extension, this grant will continue through mid-May, to maximize outreach and ongoing sustainability efforts. The first set of monthly activity and financial reports are under review.
- **Sector US** – *In this sector, CCSSP explored the reality of this population group and discovered significant potential for civic initiatives. With Latin American NGOs whose experience and characteristics are similar to the target population, civic activities are conducted to influence independent action.*
- **Other Activities**
 - [SJO082]: The grantee is in the process of completing corrective actions required per the results of the internal audit conducted in February by the Program Development Officer and Creative's Field Finance Manager. A majority of these actions have been completed, and relevant documents submitted. OTI/Creative staff is reviewing all documents for final approval before any additional activities are discussed and subsequent decisions are made.
 - [SJO090]: The monitoring and evaluation portion of this grant is completed, and has been received by Creative for final review and approval. This M&E tool will supplement final reports from the grantee to demonstrate implementation progress and impact. Upon approval of this tool, the grant will move into administrative and financial closeout.
 - [SJO096]: The beneficiaries are implementing activities throughout several provinces and have provided updates on these activities. A full report will be submitted once activities are completed and the grant closeout process will begin.
 - [SJO097]: Final payments are under review and will be completed in April 2012 following delays in documentation submissions from the grantee. Following these payments, the grant will move into administrative closeout.
 - [SJO099]: This grant is currently in administrative closeout. The grantee submitted documentation for final payments, which are under secondary review. The final evaluation will be written upon approval of all activity reports and the grant will be closed.
 - [SJO109]: This grant continues activities developed under SJO099. The grantee is currently implementing the first set of activities. A grantee staff member was trained in administrative procedures, and is working with the beneficiaries to prepare for the second set of activities including a cash disbursement and field work to distribute material assistance.

Program Operations

- Grants cleared to date: **108** (15 in process, 15 completed, 66 closed, 7 cancelled, 5 rejected after clearance)

| Status Count | | | | |
|--------------|---------|-----------|--------|---------------------------------------|
| Pending | Cleared | Completed | Closed | Cancelled / Rejected |
| 0 | 15 | 15 | 66 | 7 / 10* <i>*5 had been cleared</i> |

| CLEARED | | |
|-----------|--------|----------------|
| 1 | SJO090 | \$45,418.00 |
| 2 | SJO096 | \$50,425.00 |
| 3 | SJO097 | \$49,482.00 |
| 4 | SJO098 | \$70,000.00 |
| 5 | SJO099 | \$61,952.00 |
| 6 | SJO100 | \$175,400.00 |
| 7 | SJO101 | \$237,901.00 |
| 8 | SJO102 | \$81,301.00 |
| 9 | SJO103 | \$22,649.00 |
| 10 | SJO104 | \$66,158.00 |
| 11 | SJO105 | \$157,543.00 |
| 12 | SJO106 | \$29,266.00 |
| 13 | SJO107 | \$127,492.00 |
| 14 | SJO109 | \$72,620.00 |
| 15 | SJO111 | \$162,418.00 |
| Subtotal: | | \$1,410,025.00 |

| COMPLETED | | |
|-----------|--------|--------------|
| 1 | SJO061 | \$26,671.00 |
| 2 | SJO075 | \$30,509.00 |
| 3 | SJO076 | \$71,104.00 |
| 4 | SJO078 | \$39,553.00 |
| 5 | SJO079 | \$65,219.00 |
| 6 | SJO082 | \$185,409.00 |
| 7 | SJO083 | \$35,509.00 |
| 8 | SJO084 | \$91,254.00 |
| 9 | SJO085 | \$42,903.00 |
| 10 | SJO087 | \$90,000.00 |
| 11 | SJO092 | \$80,443.00 |
| 12 | SJO093 | \$90,000.00 |

| | | |
|-----------|--------|----------------|
| 13 | SJO094 | \$144,922.00 |
| 14 | SJO095 | \$36,760.00 |
| 15 | SJO108 | \$15,231.00 |
| Subtotal: | | \$1,045,487.00 |

| CLOSED | | |
|--------|--------|--------------|
| 1 | SJO001 | \$95,420.00 |
| 2 | SJO003 | \$17,157.00 |
| 3 | SJO006 | \$81,421.00 |
| 4 | SJO007 | \$123,098.00 |
| 5 | SJO008 | \$34,332.00 |
| 6 | SJO009 | \$24,256.00 |
| 7 | SJO010 | \$30,359.00 |
| 8 | SJO011 | \$19,601.00 |
| 9 | SJO012 | \$14,204.00 |
| 10 | SJO014 | \$47,453.00 |
| 11 | SJO015 | \$7,328.00 |
| 12 | SJO016 | \$72,709.00 |
| 13 | SJO017 | \$2,345.00 |
| 14 | SJO018 | \$12,759.00 |
| 15 | SJO019 | \$89,059.00 |
| 16 | SJO020 | \$11,430.00 |
| 17 | SJO022 | \$72,098.00 |
| 18 | SJO024 | \$12,784.00 |
| 19 | SJO025 | \$86,994.00 |
| 20 | SJO026 | \$4,655.00 |
| 21 | SJO027 | \$4,743.00 |
| 22 | SJO028 | \$63,655.00 |
| 23 | SJO029 | \$57,625.00 |
| 24 | SJO030 | \$17,830.00 |
| 25 | SJO031 | \$5,876.00 |

| | | |
|----|--------|--------------|
| 26 | SJO032 | \$78,769.00 |
| 27 | SJO033 | \$74,390.00 |
| 28 | SJO034 | \$65,522.00 |
| 29 | SJO035 | \$19,429.00 |
| 30 | SJO036 | \$14,525.00 |
| 31 | SJO037 | \$36,210.00 |
| 32 | SJO038 | \$99,163.00 |
| 33 | SJO039 | \$38,510.00 |
| 34 | SJO040 | \$141,427.00 |
| 35 | SJO041 | \$4,947.00 |
| 36 | SJO042 | \$21,551.00 |
| 37 | SJO044 | \$86,900.00 |
| 38 | SJO046 | \$21,940.00 |
| 39 | SJO047 | \$29,152.00 |
| 40 | SJO048 | \$4,542.00 |
| 41 | SJO049 | \$89,900.00 |
| 42 | SJO050 | \$128,906.00 |
| 43 | SJO052 | \$53,161.00 |
| 44 | SJO053 | \$12,248.00 |
| 45 | SJO054 | \$30,309.00 |
| 46 | SJO055 | \$55,503.00 |
| 47 | SJO056 | \$69,091.00 |
| 48 | SJO057 | \$4,538.00 |
| 49 | SJO058 | \$125,571.00 |
| 50 | SJO062 | \$54,802.00 |
| 51 | SJO063 | \$8,819.00 |
| 52 | SJO064 | \$4,284.00 |
| 53 | SJO065 | \$25,886.00 |
| 54 | SJO066 | \$17,316.00 |
| 55 | SJO067 | \$86,732.00 |

| | | |
|----|--------|--------------|
| 56 | SJO068 | \$49,059.00 |
| 57 | SJO069 | \$19,149.00 |
| 58 | SJO070 | \$28,838.00 |
| 59 | SJO071 | \$55,674.00 |
| 60 | SJO072 | \$213,130.00 |
| 61 | SJO073 | \$24,155.00 |
| 62 | SJO074 | \$36,328.00 |
| 63 | SJO077 | \$176,206.00 |
| 64 | SJO080 | \$6,918.00 |
| 65 | SJO081 | \$12,245.00 |
| 66 | SJO086 | \$11,225.00 |

| | | |
|------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Subtotal: | | \$3,146,161.00 |
|------------------|--|-----------------------|

| CANCELLED | | |
|------------------|--------|--------------------|
| 1 | SJO013 | \$9,825.00 |
| 2 | SJO043 | \$5,687.00 |
| 3 | SJO045 | \$16,707.00 |
| 4 | SJO059 | \$3,325.00 |
| 5 | SJO088 | \$14,808.00 |
| 6 | SJO089 | \$17,654.00 |
| 7 | SJO091 | \$3,929.00 |
| Subtotal: | | \$71,935.00 |

| REJECTED | | |
|----------|---------|--------------------------|
| 1 | iSJO001 | |
| 2 | iSJO010 | |
| 3 | iSJO011 | |
| 4 | SJO002 | Rejected After Clearance |
| 5 | SJO004 | |
| 6 | SJO005 | |
| 7 | SJO021 | |
| 8 | SJO023 | Never Approved |
| 9 | SJO051 | |
| 10 | SJO060 | |

Administration and Operations

- **Activity Database (ADa):** Creative staff continues to update the Activity Database with information from the field. In addition, the DC-based team is working closely with the Implementation team in the field to ensure weekly tracking of grant expenditures and maintain adequate grant / operations funds control.
- **Finance:** All financial transactions continue to be managed from Washington, D.C. with support from a field finance assistant, working closely with grantees to ensure timely grant implementation. Projections for the last three months of the program are being monitored weekly to ensure obligated funds are fully committed and disbursed by the end of the implementation period.
- **Close Out:** Creative will begin the close out phase on April 1, 2012. Creative's Field Finance Manager conducted a review of grants as part of Creative's close out preparations. DC staff is working diligently to continue the review of all closed and cleared grant files to ensure all are complete and audit-ready.
- **GAO Audit:** OTI and Creative staff met with GAO Auditors for initial discussions on programmatic and financial aspects of the program March 14-15, 2012. Following these discussions, the GAO audit team requested additional financial documentation for review. Creative submitted these documents to the OTI Country Representative as instructed. On March 27, 2012, Creative received a second request for additional programmatic and financial documentation, and is currently preparing this submission for delivery to the OTI Country Representative at the preparation of this report. Creative looks forward to working with the OTI team and continued collaboration with the GAO Audit process.

3. Budget Information

| CLIN | Description | Total | Obligated | Disbursed February 2012 | Cumulative Amount |
|------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 001 | Operations | \$ 4,887,599 | | \$ 74,473.50 | \$ 4,044,419.00 |
| 002 | Fixed Fee Operations | \$ 244,380 | | \$ 4,396.17 | \$ 238,753.13 |
| 003 | Grants | \$ 10,200,000 | | \$ 97,904.02 | \$ 5,013,819.21 |
| 004 | Fixed Fee on Grants | \$ 204,000 | | \$ 1,958.08 | \$ 96,411.68 |
| | TOTAL | \$ 15,535,979 | \$ 11,170,671 | \$ 192,181.69 | \$ 9,930,810.9 |

4. Problems Encountered: Issues and Proposed Actions

- There were no issues to report in this period.

5. Upcoming Activities

Creative has the following activities planned for April 2012:

- Creative will prioritize closing grants in preparation for program closeout, and ensuring that all files are complete and audit-ready.
- During April, Creative staff will implement the closeout plan submitted to OTI in December 2011, including disposition of inventory, human resources notifications, relocation of expatriate staff and transfer of some activities to other entities to ensure sustainability.
- Creative will complete preparation of the requested programmatic and financial documentation and submit to the OTI Country Representative for secure transfer to the audit site for GAO review. Creative staff will be available to respond to any additional questions or requests.